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Aristotle on Predication[1]

Abstract: Predication is a complex entity in Aristotelian thought. The aim of the present essay is to account for this complexity, making explicit the diverse forms it assumes. To this end, we turn to a crucial chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* (1 22), where, in the most complete and developed manner within the *corpus*, Aristotle proceeds to systematize this topic.

From the analysis, it will become apparent that predication can assume, generically, five forms: 1) the predication of essence (τὸ αὐτῷ εἶναι κατηγορεῖσθαι), that is of the genus and the specific difference; 2) essential predication (τό ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορεῖσθαι), that is either of the genus or of the differences (or their genera); 3) the predication of accidents *per se* and 4) simple accidents (ὡς συμβεβηκότα κατηγορεῖσθαι); 5) accidental predication (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς κατηγορεῖσθαι).

However, only types 2–4 are forms of strict predication (ἁπλῶς). In effect, the "predication" of essence is not a genuine predication, but a formula for identity, constituting, technically, the statement of the essence of the subject (or its definition). On the other hand, accidental "predication" can only be conceived of as such equivocally, since it results from a linguistic accident through which the ontological subject of the attribution suffers a displacement to the syntactic position of the predicate, which is not, by nature, its own. In neither case does the attribution bring about any legitimate predication.

The study concludes with a discussion of Aristotle's thesis according to which no substance can be a predicate, which is implied by its notion of accidental predication, a thesis which has been – and in our opinion wrongly so – challenged in modern times.

Keywords: Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, predication, predication of essence, essential predication, predication of accidents, accidental predication.

0. Introduction

Predication is a complex entity in Aristotle's thought. The object of the present paper is to account for that complexity, rendering explicit the several forms it assumes.

Given the significance of this concept in Aristotle's logic and ontology, the task is relevant *per se*. It is, however, particularly important to avoid the confusion that can easily set in between two concept pairs whose members Aristotle is careful

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to discriminate: one, accidental predication (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς κατηγορεῖσθαι) as different from predication of accidents (ὡς συμβεβηκότα κατηγορεῖσθαι); the other, essential predication (τό ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορεῖσθαι) as different from predication of the essence (τὸ αὐτῷ εἶναι κατηγορεῖσθαι). And this is so because, for Aristotle, neither accidental predication nor predication of the essence is, strictly speaking, *predication*, but rather the "lower" and "upper" margins within whose scope predication is defined.

The "upper" limit – predication of the essence – is definition. The distinction between definition and approximate forms of predication (viz., essential predication) is crucial to set up a precise distinction between predication and definition and to understand the singularity the notion of definition holds within the set of attributive statements in Aristotle.

The "lower" limit corresponds to that which Philoponus dubbed "counternatural predication" (παρὰ φύσιν), so as to distinguish it from predication proper or, as he would call it, "natural predication" (κατὰ φύσιν)[2] – clearly, a heavily symbolic classification.

It is in a crucial chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* (I 22), a chapter which apparent purpose is merely to show the impossibility of an infinite chain of premises in demonstration, that we can find, in a thorough and systematic manner, Aristotle's schematisation of the various types of predication.

Accordingly, it will be by addressing this chapter, in the form of a running commentary on each of its significant units, that we will attempt to follow Aristotle's lesson on this issue.

In the end, we will draw some consequences regarding a strong thesis of Aristotle's theory of predication, viz., that no individual can be a predicate.

1. Strict Predication and Accidental Predication

1.1 Text[3]

> In the case of predicates constituting the essential nature of a thing [τῶν ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορουμένων], the situation is clear: if definition is possible, or, in other words, if essential form is knowable,[4] and an infinite series cannot be traversed, predicates

2 Cf. *In APo*. 236.24–26 Wallies.

3 *APo*. I 22, 82b37–83a17. (All translations of this chapter are Mure's, with corrections.)

4 Here, the conjunction ἤ clearly holds epexegetic, not disjunctive, value (thus Mure, Tredennick, Tricot; Barnes, Pellegrin).

> constituting a thing's essential nature [τὰ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορούμενα] must be finite in number.
>
> But as regards predicates generally we have the following prefatory remarks to make. We can affirm without falsehood that the white (thing) is walking and that that big (thing) is a log; or again, that the log is big and that the man walks. But the affirmation differs in the two cases. When I affirm that the white is a log, I mean that something which happens to be white is a log [ὅτι ᾧ συμβέβηκε λευκῷ εἶναι ξύλον ἐστίν], not that white is the subject in which log inheres; for it is not because it is white or precisely a certain type of white [οὔδ' ὅπερ λευκόν τι] that the white (thing) comes to be a log. Therefore, the white (thing) is not a log except by accident [ὥστ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός]. On the other hand, when I affirm that the log is white, I do not mean that something else, which happens also to be a log [ἐκείνῳ δὲ συμβέβηκε ξύλῳ εἶναι], is white (as I should if I said that the musician is white, which would mean that the man who happens also to be a musician [ᾧ συμβέβηκεν εἶναι μουσικῷ] is white); on the contrary, log is here the subject, which actually came to be white and did so because it is a log or precisely a certain log, not because it is something else. If, then, we must lay down a rule, let us entitle the latter kind of statement predication [κατηγορεῖν], and the former not predication at all, or not strict [ἁπλῶς] but accidental predication [κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς].

1.2 Comment

In these two paragraphs, Aristotle drafts a preliminary enumeration of several types of predication: essential predication;[5] predication proper, or strict predication;[6] and accidental predication.[7]

Strict predication (ἁπλῶς) and accidental predication (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) are clearly distinguished at the end of the passage as opposite types of predication.

The text is, at this point, particularly interesting.

The distinction between accidental and strict predication is there made to depend on a metaphysical interpretation of the subject/predicate pair, namely, that not every term that can fill the predicate's logical or syntactic slot in a sentence refers to a predicate in the ontological sense, and particularly the actual predicate of the thing referred to by the sentence's subject, that is, a property that actually belongs to it. A more basic distinction is here being assumed between that which is a predicate by nature, i.e., that *which is said of something* (of a "natural" subject), and that which is a subject by nature, i.e., that *of which something* (a "natural" predicate) *is said*.

5 82b37–83a1.
6 83a9–14.
7 83a4–9.

Aristotle's thesis that no individual (or, in the terms of the *Categories*, no primary substance) can be a predicate is here justified. What it states is that every individual is "naturally" a subject, for which reason it cannot be (from an ontological point a view) a predicate. When an individual comes to be a predicate (from a logical or syntactic point of view), which is to say, in more rigorous terms, when it happens that the name of an individual, or, in general, a singular term, fills the predicative slot in an attributive sentence, this happens in a merely accidental way, i.e., by virtue of a linguistic accident that abusively shifts it to that inappropriate slot.[8]

Now, this is the assumption that justifies the distinction between strict predication (where subject and predicate are "natural") and accidental predication, where subject (e.g., musician in "The musician is white") or both subject and predicate (e.g., "That white thing is a log") are not "natural".[9]

We can thus say that, concerning the distinction between these two types of predication, the late Neoplatonic nomenclature that dubbed them "natural" and "counternatural", respectively, albeit not introduced by the Stagirite, quite aptly reflects the spirit of his doctrine in this regard.

It is worth pointing out that the relation of either one or both types of predication to the essential predication mentioned in the first paragraph is nowhere clarified. Furthermore, it is not explicit whether such predication should be included under strict predication or, on the contrary, whether it should be understood as some autonomous type to which the two other types of predication distinguished in the second paragraph would jointly oppose.

In this circumstance, the table resulting from the two initial paragraphs can be, quite simply, as follows:

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8 See, typically, *APr*. I 27, 43a32–36: "It is clear then that certain things are not naturally said of anything [ἔνια τῶν ὄντων κατ' οὐδενὸς πέφυκε λέγεσθαι]: in fact, each sensible thing has such a nature that it cannot be predicated of anything, *save by accident* [πλὴν ὡς κατὰ συμβεβηκός], as when we say that that white thing is Socrates [τὸ λευκὸν ἐκεῖνο Σωκράτην εἶναι] or that that thing that approaches us is Callias [καὶ τὸ προσιὸν Καλλίαν]."

9 Along the same lines, cf. *Metaph*. Δ 7, 1017a7–22, and also: *Int*. 11, 21a7–16; *APr.* I 27, 43a32–43; *APo*. I 4, 73b5–10; *APo*. I 19, 81b23–29. Other occurrences in: *APo*. I 13, 79a6; *Ph*. I 4, 188a8; *Metaph*. A 6, 987b23; B 4, 1001a6; B 4, 1001a10; B 4, 1001a 28; N 1, 1087a33; N 1, 1087a 35; N 1, 1088a28.

1st PREDICATION TABLE	
Predication	*Essential* (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι) *Strict* (ἁπλῶς) *Accidental* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός)

However, given that all examples added in the second paragraph are examples of non-essential predication, one could assume that the distinction Aristotle introduced therein between strict predication and accidental predication is not to be added to the type mentioned in the first paragraph, but to oppose to it, which would entail reformulating the table thus:

2nd PREDICATION TABLE		
Predication	*Essential* (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι)	
	Non-essential	**Strict (ἁπλῶς)** *Accidental* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός)

This is probably why the differentiation between strict and accidental predications opens the subsequent text, which is aimed at excluding the latter, but not the former, from the discussion.

2. Strict Predication

2.1 Text[10]

> White and log will thus serve as types respectively of predicate and subject. We shall assume, then, that the predicate is invariably predicated strictly [ἁπλῶς] and not accidentally [ἀλλὰ μὴ κατὰ συμβεβηκός] of the subject, for on such predication demonstrations depend for their force. It follows from this that when a single attribute is predicated of a single subject, the predicate must affirm of the subject either some element constituting its essential nature [ἢ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστιν], or that it is in some way qualified, quantified, related, active, passive, placed, or dated.

10 *APo*. I 22, 83a17–23.

2.2 Comment

The content of the present paragraph can be captured in the following theses:

1) In every predicative sentence, a predicate stands in the same relation to the subject as 'B' stands to 'A' in the standard sentence 'A is B'.
2) The predicate can be predicated of the subject either strictly or accidentally.
3) In canonical, or strict, predicative sentences, the predicate stands in the same relation to the subject as "white" stands to "log" in the sentence "The log is white". (Up to this point, we have merely summed up the doctrine accounted for in the previous paragraph.)
4) Now, every strict predication abides by the table of categories; therefore, in such predication, the predicate says of the subject either what the subject is, or of which type it is, or in relation to what it is, etc.
5) In the first of the mentioned cases in (4), the predication is essential predication (ἢ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστιν).
6) In all remaining cases, it will certainly be strict, but not essential, predication.

The consequences of this clarification for our subject matter, particularly for solving the problem left suspended in section 1, are evident.

Following this clarification, strict predication is the predication type that can be essential or non-essential, in which case the former is rehabilitated (and given the same status as the latter) as a type of strict predication.

We may now use the data from the current paragraph to put forward a third predication table:

3rd PREDICATION TABLE			
Predication	*Strict* (ἁπλῶς)	*Essential* (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστιν)	
		Non-essential (ποιόν, ποσόν...)	
	Accidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκός)		

There is a staggering difference between the second and third tables:

2nd PREDICATION TABLE		
Predication	*Essential*	
	Non-essential	Strict
		Accidental

3rd PREDICATION TABLE		
Predication	**Strict**	*Essential*
		Non-essential
	Accidental	

In the left-hand side table, essential predication is opposed to both strict predication and accidental predication, which are there presented as two types of non-essential predication.

In the right-hand side table, essential predication is placed under strict predication, and it is the latter that, in both its variants (essential predication and non-essential predication), is now opposed to non-strict, or accidental, predication.

Clearly, the point of contrast concerns which locus to attribute to essential predication.

Before such a huge discrepancy between the two classifications, to which should we ascribe greater value? Should essential predication be considered a sub-type of strict predication (third table) or, on the contrary, it is to stand as a predication type, side-by-side with non-essential (strict and accidental) predication (second table)?

This can only be decided in light of the information provided in the subsequent paragraphs.

3. Strict Predication *(a)* of the Substance and *(b)* of Accidents

3.1 Text[11]

> Predicates which signify substance signify precisely the subject, or a certain type of the subject. Predicates not signifying substance which are predicated of a subject which is neither precisely what the subject is, nor a certain type of what the subject is, are accidents [συμβεβηκότα]. For instance, when you predicate white of man, man is not precisely white or precisely a certain type of white [οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὔτε ὅπερ λευκὸν οὔτε ὅπερ λευκόν τι], but rather animal, since man is precisely an animal [ὅπερ γὰρ ζῷόν ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος]. These predicates which do not signify substance must be predicates of some other subject, and nothing can be white which is not white because of something else.

3.2 Comment

In this paragraph, Aristotle sets forth a double alternative to what we have so far been indistinctly calling "essential predication".

On the one hand, some essential predicates (or "things which signify substance") are those that "signify *precisely* the subject". In this case, essential predicates express the nature or identity of the subject itself, and therefore, in the predicative sentence, the predicate is identical to the subject.[12]

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11 *APo*. I 22, 83a24–32.

12 The terms "identical", "identification", "identity", which we will henceforth systematically use, always possesses intensional value, expressing the interchangeability of the

On the other hand, essential predicates can also be those that signify "*a certain type* of what the subject is". In this instance, essential predicates do not express the subject itself, but that under which the subject falls in the generative scale, namely, a genus or a differentia of the subject.[13]

Considering the alternative here proposed, we may now understand that essential predication *in a certain sense is* and *in a certain sense is not* strict predication, which allows us to understand the reason for the discrepancy between the second and third tables, as well as to solve it, bringing it to a more enlightening compatibility.

In a certain sense it is, and in another sense it is not, strict predication, because it itself already has two meanings, namely, those two we have just introduced.

Let us be quite clear, though, as to what this means. It is not that, in Aristotle, the present sentence on the one hand excludes, while on the other hand includes, essential predication from strict predication. In fact, from Aristotle's point of view, the characterisation of essential predication here introduced is stated *against non-essential predication* and *within the general framework of strict predication*. This much is shown in the fact that Aristotle proceeds to this characterisation after having restricted the discussion to strict predication,[14] and by his introducing in the next lines, as a contrast, predication of accidents[15] as a second type of strict predication. Accordingly, essential predication is here presented as a sub-type of that which is called, simply, "to predicate" (κατηγορεῖν ἁπλῶς). And this is clearly coherent with the fact that predication ἁπλῶς abides by the table of categories, wherein the substance (under which essential predicates fall) is merely a category amongst others.

For Aristotle, the question is therefore simple: either there is real predication, in which case it abides by the table of categories, where essential predicates are included; or there is no predication at all, unless in a certain accidental sense.

When we limit ourselves to predication ἁπλῶς, as Aristotle does in the beginning, essential predication comes to be but a kind of strict predication, or, simply put, one kind of predication.

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subject and the predicate and not just their simple co-extensionality. Technically speaking, in Aristotle, the latter constitutes predication proper (ἴδιος), whilst the former is the definition (cf. *Topics* I 4–5, 8).

13 Cf. 83b1.

14 83a17–23.

15 83a25–35.

In this light, to technically distinguish predication ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι, predication ἁπλῶς and predication κατὰ συμβεβηκός, as we did in our first table, is to distance ourselves from the Aristotelian classification.

This is so because, for Aristotle, either there is or there is not predication. If there is, then predication can *as well* be essential (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι). If there is not, it can nevertheless occur *accidentally* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός).

In Aristotle's view, the crucial divide stands thus between (strict) predication and accidental predication. In face of this divide, essential predication has virtually no specificity at all (except, of course, to the extent that it is one of the types in which predication is subdivided).

All this appears to definitively establish the third predication table as the correct one from an Aristotelian perspective. However, this is not so. And it is not so *precisely because of the passage we are currently commenting*. Despite what Aristotle could have (or would have liked to have) expressly acknowledged, this passage sets the grounds for a new account of strict predication, one which opposes not just accidental predication, but also essential predication, or, at least, a certain type of essential predication. It is, therefore, essential predication itself which is, in this clause, implicitly reassessed. This reassessment enables us to understand why essential predication in a sense is, and in another sense is not, strict predication and, above all, it enables us to understand *in what sense* essential predication is, and *in what sense* it is not, strict predication.

From a general point of view, essential predication is, as already seen, strict predication, for predication ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι predicates under the category of substance. However, the adjective "strict" means here only that essential predication is *simply* (ἁπλῶς) a type of predication and not a kind of pseudo-predication – a predication "by accident".

That said, if we pay close attention to the nature of essential predication, as it is here defined by Aristotle, we realise that there is something fundamental that sets it apart from every other type of predication ἁπλῶς. In this sense, the term ἁπλῶς acquires a new meaning, circumscribing everything that is predication proper, as opposed to accidental "predications" which, *due to some motive*, are not genuine predications, but also as opposed to essential "predications" which, *due to another motive*, are not, likewise, genuine predications.

Accidental "predications" are not genuine predications because the sentence's predicate does not refer to an actual property of the thing referred to by the sentence's subject, i.e., something that truly belongs to it. In Aristotle's terms, in sentences expressing such "predications", the predicate is not attributed to the subject in virtue of the subject being precisely what it is, but because something

else (sometimes, the predicate itself) is, accidentally, that subject. Thus, in "The musician is white", it is not because the musician is a musician, but because *there is a certain man who happens to be a musician*, that the predicate is (accidentally) attributed to the subject. Likewise, in "that white thing is a log", it is not because that white thing is white, but because *there is a certain log which happens to be white*, that the predicate is (accidentally) attributed to the subject. In this sense, the reason why accidental "predications" are not genuine predications is that one necessary condition of predication is not fulfilled: the predicate is not attributed to the subject because the subject is what it is (or, which is the same, the predicate is not attributed to the subject as something that really belongs to it). In accidental predications, what we see is that, by virtue of a syntactic accident, something that is not a "natural" predicate, or a "natural" subject, shifts, in the sentence, into a logical place that does not "naturally" belong to it.

Now, in the case of essential "predications", this requirement is fulfilled. But, in a way, it is *excessively* fulfilled, for, in this case, the predicate is not simply attributed to the subject *because* the subject is precisely what it is, but because the subject *is precisely that predicate*.

Accordingly, whereas in accidental "predications" the predicative link does not truly exist, for the sentence's predicates do not refer to actual properties of the subject, in essential "predications", the predicative link is not truly predicative, for the sentence's predicates do not refer to properties of the subject *in the strict sense of the word* (ἁπλῶς) – they refer to the subject itself.

In a word, essential "predications" are not, for Aristotle, genuine predications, but identity formulae. They must thus be distinguished from strict predication, just as it happened with accidental "predications", albeit for a different reason.

Granted that nowhere in this chapter does Aristotle expressly draw this conclusion. However, in an overall context, this conclusion is required by the characterisation of predication *qua* attribution "of something to something" (τὶ κατὰ τινός),[16] or "of another to another" (ἕτερον καθ' ἑτέρου), [17] or still "of one to one" (ἓν καθ' ἑνός),[18] whereas the attribution of essence is a process "of the same to the same" (αὐτὰ αὑτῶν).[19]

In sum, essential "predication" cannot be strictly considered as predication, in that it is *a definition*: and a definition does not say something of something, but

16 Cf. *Int*. 6, 17a25 (and 3, 16b6–10); *APr*. I 1 24a16.
17 Cf. *Cat*. 3, 1b10.
18 See, especially, *APo*. I 22, 83b17–19.
19 Cf. *ibid*.

simply *the* something;[20] it does not say of something *that [it] is* something, but merely *what* the something is.[21]

It should be noted that this concords with the distinction, consistently assumed by Aristotle, in the context of the classification of the principles of demonstration,[22] between saying "that it is" (ὅτι ἔστι) and saying "what it means" (τί σημαίνει): definitions do not say that something is something, they merely say what something means. Therefore, only axioms and theses (hypotheses and postulates) are predications – not so definitions. Definitions are not so because they do not truly contain a τὶ κατά τινος λέγεσθαι.

Now, this allows us to understand why is it that essential predication *is and is not strict predication* and the sense in which it *is* and the sense in which it *is not* strict predication.

In fact, everything we have developed throughout the present point is valid for definitions only: and what the doctrine introduced in this passage shows exactly is that *not every essential predication is a definition*.

Aristotle distinguishes between essential predicates that mean *precisely that of which they are predicated* and those that mean *a certain type* of that of which they are predicated.

Let us recall an excerpt already cited:[23]

> For instance, when you predicate white of man: man is not precisely white or precisely a certain type of white, but rather animal, since man is precisely an animal.

That is: in the predication "the man is white", subject and predicate are not the same, because the man is not the white, nor a certain type of white (a specific kind of white). But in the predication "man is an animal", subject and predicate are the same, because man is a (certain type of) animal, i.e., a specific kind of animal.

In the former predicative sentence, that which is attributed is, therefore, an accident of man (white), whereas the latter attributes that of which man is a species (animal).

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20 See *APo*. II 4, 91b1–7 (and cf. 91a15–16; II 6, 92a6–9; II 13, 96a20-b1); *Top*. I 5, 102a13–14 (and cf. VII 2, 152b39–153a1); *Metaph*. Z 4, 1030a7–11.

21 Paradigmatically in *APo*. II 3, 90b38–91a2: "Furthermore, to prove *what it is* [τὸ τί ἐστι] and *that it is* [ὅτι ἔστι] is different. Definition shows what it is, while demonstration [shows] that this is or is not [said] of that [ἡ δὲ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι ἔστι τόδε κατὰ τοῦδε ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν]." But cf. also *APo*. I 1, 71a11–17; 2, 72a18–24; 10, 76b35–77a4.

22 Cf. *APo*. I 1, 71a1–17; 2, 72a14–24; 10, 76a31–36.

23 83a28–30.

Now, in general, these two examples outline the distinction between predication of accidents and predication of the substance as *types of strict predication*.

However, if we were to add to them the example Aristotle does not provide in this step, viz., "man is a biped animal", where subject and predicate are the same (for man *is precisely what to be a biped animal is*) the existence of a further type of attributive statement would clearly follow – one that would no longer be strict predication, but instead more-than-strict (so to speak), or hyperbolic, predication, for in it the predicate is *precisely* the subject.

The difference between the two types of essential predication is now clear: in general predication under the category of substance, the subject is not identified *with the* predicate (man is not animal); instead, it is identified *as* "a certain type" of the predicate (man is a certain kind of animal). In predication of the essence, on the contrary, the subject is identified with the predicate itself (man is a biped animal); we have, thus, *a definition*. In other words, the copulative relation is not, in the latter case, from predicate to subject, rather from *definiens* to *definiendum*.

That is why the distinction between the two types of sentence is, from a logical point of view, quite clear too: only the latter is convertible, the former is not. This is precisely what the notion of definition as a predication both proper and essential, which expresses an identity both extensional and intensional, comprehending at the same time the objects that are in the extension of the concepts and the meaning of the concepts themselves, allows to technically legislate.[24]

Now, only in the latter case do we have a definition, where both genus *and* differentia are attributed to the subject. In the former case, on the contrary, that which is attributed to the subject is an essential predicate (either the genus *or* the differentia), but not the whole *definiens*.

Thus, in the latter case, the sentence expresses an identity, and is not *strictly* a predication, whereas in the former, despite the fact that the attributed predicates are ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι, they are not the τί ἐστιν itself, and thus the attribution is operated as a predication *stricto sensu* (κατηγορεὶν ἁπλῶς).[25]

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24 Cf. *APo*. II 4, 91a15–16; II 6, 92a6–9; II 13, 96a20-b1; but especially: *Top*. I 4, 101b19–23; I 6, 102b27–35; I 8, 103b6–19; VI 1, 139a31–32; VII 5, 154a37-b12; and *passim*.

25 On the distinction between essential predication and predication of the essence (or definition), the clearest passage by Aristotle is perhaps the following: "For if A is predicable as a mere consequent of B and B of C, A will not on that account be the definable form of C: A will merely be what it was true to say of C. *Even if A is predicated of all B inasmuch as B is precisely a certain type of A* [οὐδ' εἰ ἔστι τὸ A ὅπερ τι καὶ κατὰ τοῦ B κατηγορεῖται παντός], *still it will not follow*: being an animal is predicated of being a man (since it is true that in all instances to be human is to be animal, just as it is also

We are now able to establish the sense in which essential predication is and the sense in which it is not strict predication: it is strict predication when that which is attributed is an essential predicate of the subject, but not *the complete essence* of the subject; it is not strict predication when that which is attributed is the very essence of the subject or, in other words, when it is a definition.

One must therefore distinguish between: *(a)* predication of essence; *(b)* essential strict predication ("of the substance"); *(c)* non-essential strict predication ("of accidents"); and *(d)* accidental predication.

In face of these elements, it is now possible to revise the Aristotelian table of predication thus:

4th PREDICATION TABLE			
Predication	*Of the essence* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι)		→ definition: genus *and* differentiae
	Strict (ἁπλῶς)	*of the substance* (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι)	→ essential predicate: genus *or* differentiae
		of accidents (συμβεβηκότα)	→ accidental predicate: quality, quantity …
	Accidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκός)		

The following observations may be taken as the key of the table, so to speak:

1) Predication of the essence is the statement of the essence of the subject, i.e., the definition.[26]
2) Strict predication is that in which a "natural" predicate is said of a "natural" subject.
3) When the predicate is part of the subject's essence (in other words, when it is a predicate under the category of substance), the case is one of strict predication of the substance.
4) When the predicate is a simple accidental predicate of subject (alternatively, when it is a predicate under a category other than that of substance), the case is one of predication of the accident.
5) Accidental predication is that in which predication proceeds in a "counternatural" way either because (a), in a sentence, an accident is attributed to another

true that every man is an animal), but not as identical with being man [ἀλλ' οὐχ οὕτως ὥστε ἓν εἶναι]." (*APo*. II 4, 91b1–7; and cf. also II 13, 96a20-b1)

26 Cf. *Top*. I 5, 101b38. *Cf. APo*. II 3, 90b29–33; *Top*. I 4, 101b17–23; I 8, 103b6–12; V 2, 130b25–28; V 3, 131b37–132a9; VII 3, 153a6–22; VII 5, 154a23–32; VII 5, 155a18–22; *Metaph*. Δ 8, 1017b21–22; Z 4, 1030a2-b13; Z 5, 1031a1–14; Z 13, 1039a19–20; and also *APo*. I 22, 82b37–83a1; II 3, 90b3–4; *Top*. I 6, 102b27–35; I 18, 108a38-b6; V 5, 135a9–12; VI 4, 141a26-b2; VI 4, 141b15–34; *Metaph*. B 3, 998b4–8.

accident ("The musician is white"), or because (b), in a sentence, a substance is attributed to an accident ("that white thing is a log").

As we shall see, the next text will provide us with elements to fine-tune this terminology and to adapt it in accordance with the Aristotelian table of predication.

4. A Preliminary Account

Before moving forwards, though, let us see how these data and those that follow from the previous paragraph enable us to adjust and improve the classification of predication types implicitly addressed in this chapter of the *Posterior Analytics*.

After those paragraphs where he distinguished accidental predication from strict predication, restricted the investigation to the latter and brought back that which can be predicated under the scope of the table of categories, Aristotle advances two steps in this paragraph: on the one hand, he integrates predicates under the category of substance in predication ἁπλῶς; on the other, he reintroduces the notion of accident with a new purpose, viz., not as means to discriminate between types of predication, but to designate one of the predicate classes that, together with those that fall under the category of substance, will exhaust the entirety of what can be strictly predicated.[27]

Taken together, the two newly integrated elements do not add new types of predication to the already established ones. What they do bring is a further characterisation of the types in which strict predication is subdivided: the predication of substance, on the one hand, and the predication of accidents, on the other.

However, the simple fact that Aristotle makes here explicit that predication of accidents is a kind of strict predication is, in itself, significant in another regard.

By doing so, the difference between the two senses in which the word συμβεβηκός may intervene to qualify predication is conclusively rendered clear: in one of those senses, it determines *accidental* predication, which is accidental insofar as it is not predication except by accident (κατὰ συμβεβηκός, *per accidens*); in the other, quite distinct, sense, it delimits predication *of accidents*, which is predication *strictu sensu* (ἁπλῶς), although that which is given through it as predicates of the subject are its accidents (ὡς συμβεβηκότα, *qua accidens*).

In the first case, accidentalness qualifies the very predication: and, via this qualificative, such "predication" stands excluded from the set of strict predication. In

27 For which reason, as aptly noted by Ross, "the predication of συμβεβηκότα is of course to be distinguished from the predication κατὰ συμβεβηκός dealt with in the previous paragraph" (Ross 1949: 577).

the second case, accidentalness qualifies but the predicate: therefore, the genuine character of the predication is not affected.

In the first case, accidentalness has a methodological sense and its task is to keep seemingly predicative formulae from the strict domain of predication. In the second case, it bears ontological value and its task is to discriminate a certain type of predicate that has legitimate place in strict predication.

Retrospectively, it is not immaterial that, when distinguishing between accidental predication and strict predication, Aristotle never fails to mention predication of accidents as an instance of strict predication:[28] for that means that, in the distinction between (strict) predication and mere accidental predication, a further distinction, viz., between predication of accidents and accidental predication, is also being established.[29] This is, of course, a particularly important point of the present text.

At the same time, though – as we have just seen in considerable detail –, the paragraph also suggests another relevant aspect: by virtue of its very structure, predication of the substance would be better characterised if we allow it to be distinguished further, between predication of the essence (which is not, strictly speaking, predication, and should therefore be treated separately, viz., as definition) and predication of that which "is in the essence", namely, the genus or the differentiae (which is, from a logical standpoint, strict predication – albeit with unique features – and can thus be considered as a subtype of predication ἁπλῶς, viz., essential predication).

One final observation. Obviously enough, "substance" covers two different meanings in this context: one, the category under which the substance is predicated (i.e., predication of genera or of differentiae); the other, the "natural" subject which, in one of the accidental predication modalities, is shifted to the predicate's logical slot. In neither of these senses, however, is the substance itself a predicate: in the former case, it stands as a category of predicates (the genera and differentiae

28 "We can affirm without falsehood that the white (thing) is walking and that that big (thing) is a log; or again, that the log is big and that the man walks. But the affirmation differs in the two cases. When I affirm that the white is a log, I mean that something which happens to be white is a log, not that white is the subject in which log inheres …" (*APo*. I 22, 83a1–7)

29 The most paradigmatic case is to be found in *APo*. I 19, 81b25–29: "Here is what I mean by 'accidental': when we say, for instance, that that white thing is a man we are not saying the same thing as when we say that the man is white, since the man is not white because he is something else, while the white thing [is a man] because the white is, for man, an accident."

said of subjects); in the latter, it is a substance *strictu sensu*, therefore necessarily a subject that only by accident comes to fill the predicate's logical slot.

One should note at this point that Aristotle does not clarify (a) whether "substance" should be here interpreted as concerning primary substances (in the sense of the *Categories*) only, both primary and secondary substances, or, in general, any subject exhibiting the logical behaviour of a substance,[30] and (b) whether one should take "predicates under the category of substance" to mean those genera and differences said of primary substances only, or these plus those said of secondary substances, or, in general, genera and differences of any subject exhibiting the logical behaviour of a substance.[31]

These questions could have three different answers, depending on the dominion it concerns. In the context of the discussion motivating these developments (viz., the possibility of demonstrations having an infinite number of premises), the appropriate response would be the most restrictive, for the purpose would be that of guaranteeing that the series of subjects stops at individuals (and the series of predicates at categories). In the wider context of *Posterior Analytics*, the convenient answer would be either of intermediate restrictiveness or the broadest possible, in that demonstrations typically deal with universals, for which reason both predicates and subjects should be universal. Generally speaking, nothing militates against choosing the broadest answer; on the contrary, everything points towards it being the favoured one.

5. Predication of Accidents *(a) Per Se* and *(b)* Not *Per Se*

5.1 Text[32]

> I assume first that predication implies a single subject and a single attribute [ὑπόκειται δὴ ἓν καθ' ἑνὸς κατηγορεῖσθαι] and secondly that, in the case of non-essential predication, the same things are not predicated of the same things [αὐτὰ δὲ αὑτῶν, ὅσα μὴ τί ἐστι, μὴ κατηγορεῖσθαι]. We assume this because such predicates are all accidents, though some are accidents *per se* [ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν καθ' αὑτά] and others of a different type [τὰ δὲ καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον]. Yet we maintain that all of them alike are predicated of some subject and that an accident is never a subject, since we do not class anything as accident except when what it says is said due to its being something other than itself [οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν τοιούτων τίθεμεν εἶναι ὃ οὐχ ἕτερόν τι ὂν λέγεται ὃ λέγεται] …

30 Cf. *Metaph*. Z 1, 1028a36-b2; Z 4, 1030a17–27.

31 Cf. *Top*. I 9, 103b27–39; *Metaph*. Z 1, 1028a36-b2; Z 4, 1030a17–27.

32 *APo*. I 22, 83b17–23.

5.2 Comment

We introduce now the last remaining element that allows us to complete the Aristotelian classification of predication: the distinction between accidents *per se* and "simple" accidents.[33]

We may reformulate the corresponding table thus:

5th PREDICATION TABLE
Predication { *Of the essence* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι); *Strict* (ἁπλῶς) { *of the substance* (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι) ! { *per se* (καθ' αὑτά); *proper* (καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον); *of accidents* (συμβεβηκότα) }; *Accidental* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) }

Some final observations in this regard:

1) Predication *strictu sensu* is that which is neither accidental predication nor predication of the essence.
2) It corresponds to three types: *[i]* predication of genus or differences; *[ii]* predication of accidents *per se*; *[iii]* predication of "simple" accidents.
3) "Predication" of the essence is not, in fact, predication, rather an identity formula, in the terms previously mentioned.
4) Accidental "predication" is predication only equivocally: in fact, it occurs only when, by virtue of a grammatical accident, the term that refers to the ontological subject of the attribution slides into the predicate's syntactic slot, which is not naturally its own, so that, in the sentence, there is no actual restitution of any genuine predication.

33 Cf. in this regard *Metaph*. Δ 30, 1025a30–34. Other occurrences, both explicit and implicit, of συμβεβηκότα καθ' αὑτά can be found in: *APo*. I 7, 75b1 (and *cf*. I 10, 76b13; I 28, 87a39); *Ph*. II 2, 193b27–28, and III 4, 203b33 (and cf. *De an*. I 1, 402a7; I 1, 402a15; I 1, 402b18; I 1, 402b21; I 1, 402b23–24; I 1,402b26–403a1; I 5, 409b14); *PA* I 3, 643a27–28 (and cf. I 1, 639a18–19; I 1, 639a26; I 1, 641a24–25); *PA* I 5, 645b1–3 (and cf. *HA* I 6, 491a9–11; *MA* 1, 698a1–4); *Metaph*. B 1, 995b20; B 1, 995b25–26; B 2, 997a20; B 2, 997a21–22 (and cf. *Metaph*. B 2, 997a25–34; Γ 1, 1003a21–22; Γ 2, 1005a13–14; E 1, 1025a10–13; E 1, 1026a31–32; K 3, 1061b4–6); M 3, 1078a5–6.

6. In Defence of Aristotle: No Individual Can Be a Predicate

This Aristotelian thesis, which although metaphysical in nature is, as seen throughout the current paper, inseparable from Aristotle's doctrine on predication, was challenged in modern times by several authorities.

Amongst the classic moments, it is worth highlighting those produced during the earlier decades of the 20th century by Frank Plumpton Ramsey,[34] John Cook Wilson,[35] Jan Łukasiewicz[36] and Peter Strawson.[37]

On this particular issue, the work of Cook Wilson is somewhat collateral, since it attempts to present a general doctrine on the nature of the subject and only marginally crosses paths with Aristotle's.[38]

Strawson's essays, in turn, are, to a considerable extent, a recovery of the analysis developed by Ramsey, with whom he would come to part ways later,[39] for which reason it is preferable to resort to the original directly.[40]

We are thus left with Ramsey and Łukasiewicz, to whom we now turn our attention.

The object of Ramsey's essay is to show that "the whole theory of particulars and universals is due to mistaking for a fundamental characteristic of reality what is merely a characteristic of language".[41]

To that effect, he attempts to show that "there is no essential distinction between the subject of a proposition and its predicate", hence "no fundamental classification of objects can be based upon such a distinction".[42]

Ramsey's argument can be schematically presented thus:

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34 Ramsey (1925, reedited, with an appendix from 1926, in Braithwaite 1931, from which our quotations are taken).

35 Cook Wilson (1926).

36 Łukasiewicz (1957, we translate from the French edition).

37 Successively in Strawson (1953–1954, 1957a, and 1957b).

38 In the terms of that doctrine, a subject is that of which a sentence asserts something, which, depending on the context, may or may not coincide with the grammatical subject and, in general, with the nominal component that integrates the sentence.

39 Cf. Strawson (1959: 177–179 and 237).

40 For pertinent criticism on Strawson's primitive position, see Sellars (1957) and Baylis (1957).

41 Braithwaite (1931: 117).

42 Braithwaite (1931: 116).

1. "Socrates is wise" and "Wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates" express the same proposition.[43]
2. However, that which is subject in one is predicate in the other, and vice-versa.
3. Now, given that any predicative sentence can be analogously converted into an equivalent sentence where subject and predicate switch places, it follows that "there is no essential distinction between the subject of a proposition and its predicate".

The argument would be persuasive if the second premise were true. As it happens, it is not. In fact, the first sentence's predicate is the second sentence's subject, but the first sentence's subject *is not* the predicate of the second. "Socrates" is the subject of the first sentence; but the predicate of the second sentence is not Socrates, it is "a characteristic of Socrates".[44]

Thus, Ramsey only showed something we already knew, at least since Aristotle: that everything that can be a predicate in a sentence can be a subject in another. He did not show, however, what he intended to show: that if it can be a subject in a sentence, then it can be a predicate in another. The Aristotelian irreducibility of the individual as ultimate subject remains thus unscathed.

But there is more. The second premise involves a fatal ambiguity. When we say "that which is subject *in one*, is predicate *in the other*, and vice-versa", the phrases "in one" and "in the other" indicate different things depending on whether they refer, in Ramsey's terms, the sentence or the proposition.[45] The point is that, if one adopts, as does Ramsey, the distinction between sentence and proposition, one assumes that the latter is relatively independent from the former, particularly in view of the fact that it is precisely in order to safeguard the inalterability of the proposition against formal variations that affect the sentence that the distinction itself

43 In Strawson, who renovates, although more timidly, Ramsey's argument, the standard example is "All Socrates' virtues were possessed by Plato" (cf. Strawson 1957a: 446–449).

44 Sellars, too, points out, not only against Strawson, but directly against Ramsey, that in "Wisdom is instantiated by Socrates", the predicate is not "Socrates", rather "to be instantiated by Socrates" (cf. Strawson 1957a: 470).

45 The distinction between proposition, the assertive content of a sentence, and sentence, the proposition's material support, can be considered an inextricable topic from essentialism in all its forms, already present in Aristotle, as we had occasion to show in a previous paper (Mesquita 2004: 259–278), and, as we can see, also assumed by Ramsey. Quine made it an irreparably controversial issue; see, especially, Quine (1934; 1958: 21–25; 1960: §§ 40–43; 1968: 139–144; 1970: 1–14; 1974: 36; 1992: 52–53, 77–79, 102; 1995: 77–78).

is put forward. As such, switching the position of the terms within the sentence will not necessarily entail an equivalent permutation in the proposition it expresses, if it is the case, as it is here, that the fact or state of affairs asserted by the proposition remains essentially unchanged when the switch takes place in the sentence. Given that the sentences "Socrates is wise" and "Wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates" express, according to Ramsey, the same proposition, the relation either sentence represents (the fact either sentence asserts, as Ramsey would put it) is the same: the relation of a predicate (wisdom) to a subject (Socrates) – a relation that holds regardless of how the proposition is grammatically transcribed, i.e., whichever term ("Socrates" or "wisdom") happens to be the grammatical subject of the sentence.

Now, there are two important things here. First, when we move from the sentence to the proposition, we realise that the subject *is always the same* – Socrates. That is, at the propositional level (which is to say, at the level of the relation represented by the sentence), the subject is, necessarily, *the ultimate subject*, i.e., the individual. Second, this is precisely why the propositional subject of a sentence "A is B" resists, by nature, being converted into a grammatical predicate; it can but *integrate*, as in the case of Ramsey's example, the grammatical predicate of the converse sentence, which asserts that B is a characteristic of A (or that B pertains to A, or that B is said of A, etc.), i.e., which precisely asserts B as *the predicate* of A.

We can now turn to Łukasiewicz. Commenting on a passage from *Prior Analytics*, he says:[46]

> This passage[47] contains some inaccuracies that it would be best to correct before going any further. It is wrong to say that one thing can be predicated by another; a predicate is part of a proposition, and a proposition consists in a series of uttered or written terms,[48] which possess a certain meaning; therefore, one cannot predicate things: one can predicate the word "Callias" by another word: one cannot predicate Callias himself. The above classification does not concern things – it concerns terms.

The reader who has followed this paper thus far will realise that this excerpt is built upon a fundamental misunderstanding concerning two levels that Aristotle keeps quite apart: the ontological level, where he speaks of predicates as something that pertains *to* things; and the logical level, where he speaks of predicates as something that is said *of* things (through the terms by which things are referred to). In the latter case, the predicate is in fact a term and it is in fact part of a sentence; in the

46 Łukasiewicz (1957: 26).

47 *APr*. I 27, 43a25–43.

48 "Proposition", for Łukasiewicz, has of course the same meaning as "sentence".

former, however, the predicate is *an entity* and, as such, it is utterly extra-logical and extra-linguistic. The entire Aristotelian system of categories (the ways according to which *something is said to be*) can only make sense assuming this presupposition.

More than that: the two levels are connected – and they are connected by *the primacy of the former over the latter*. In fact, it is only because something pertains to something else *qua* an ontological predicate that it can be said of that thing as a logical predicate. It is only insofar as something is *a predicate of something* that it can become *that which is predicated* of that thing in a sentence (in the latter case, subject and predicate are not, of course, the entities themselves, rather the terms that refer to those entities).[49]

In this sense, Aristotle never states or implies that "one thing can be predicated by another": what he does say is that "something" (i.e., an entity, in general terms) can be *a predicate of* another. He certainly states and implies, however, that "things can be predicated": for, although the subject of a predicative sentence is not the thing itself, it is the thing itself that, through its name, is predicated by the predicate of the predicative sentence.[50]

On our subject, Łukasiewicz adds: [51]

> Likewise, it is wrong to say that individual or singular terms, e.g., "Callias", cannot be truly predicated of anything. Aristotle himself is the first to line up examples of true propositions with singular predicates: "This white object is Socrates"; or "That who approaches is Callias". These propositions are true, he says, "by accident",[52] but there are other examples

49 On the problem of accidental predication, Lear sees, correctly, the juxtaposition of two levels – logical and ontological – in all predication. Cf. Lear (1980: 31): "A phrase like 'the white thing is a log' is a degenerate form of predication, for it fails to reveal the metaphysical structure of subject and predicate. It is not that the white thing is the underlying subject which happens to be a log. Rather the log is the underlying subject which happens to be white (*An*. *Pst*. 83a1–14). Only predications which reveal metaphysical structure are strict and it is with these that proof is concerned." And a few lines ahead: "Aristotle distinguishes predicating from saying truly (*An*. *Pst*. 83a38). Predication is not merely a linguistic act. Though one can say both 'the white thing is a log' and 'the log is white', only the latter is a genuine predication."

50 In fact, even from the point of view of modern elementary logic, what does it mean to say that an object satisfies a predicate, other than that object *has* the property signified by the predicate and, consequently, that the predicate is predicated *of it*? Here is a point concerning which there has been a rather unjustified desire to draw distinctions between the assumptions of modern logic and those of Aristotelian logic.

51 *Op*. and *loc*. *cit*.

52 Łukasiewicz has here in mind those cases of accidental predication (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) to which we have made abundant reference in the text.

> of the same kind which truth is not purely accidental, such as "Socrates is Socrates" or "Sophroniscus was Socrates' father".

Again, not only this excerpt depends on the misconception just detected – for the notion of predication lies, as we saw, upon an *ontological* distinction that Łukasiewicz misses –, it also is underpinned by four examples *none of which is an instance of predication*, due to the exact reasons that our preceding analysis has made clear.

This is evident in the case of the first two examples, taken from the *Prior Analytics* chapter under debate, for they correspond precisely to the examples given for accidental predication.

In "that white object is Socrates", as well as in "that who approaches is Callias", "Socrates" and "Callias" are not predicates of "that white object" and "that who approaches", respectively; rather, they are their corresponding *names*. The sentence is, consequently, an identity formula – not a predication.[53]

As to the third example, "Socrates is Socrates", it is difficult to see how the second "Socrates" could be a predicate of the first. Why is the second Socrates said of the first and not the other way around? Could the author be suggesting that it is the order of the sentence that determines the predicate of the attribution? But then, if one says "Socrates was a great philosopher", "Socrates" is the subject, yet if one says "A great philosopher was Socrates", "Socrates" becomes the predicate? It is not, evidently, the order of the sentence that determines the predicate of the attribution. And it is also clear that the first and the second "Socrates" in the sentence "Socrates is Socrates" are undistinguishable as subject and predicate, which means, in other words, that the sentence does not express a predication.

The fourth example is the most surprising. How does Łukasiewicz interpret the clause "Socrates' father" in the sentence "Sophroniscus was Socrates' father"? As a singular term? If it is a singular term, then it is either a name or a definite description: and, in both cases, not a predicate. Conversely, if it is a predicate (the predicate "*x* is Socrates' father"), then it is not a singular term. In the first case, we have no predication; in the second, the predicate is not an "individual or singular term", in Łukasiewicz's terms. In both cases, the example does not demonstrate what Łukasiewicz intended it to demonstrate.

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53 Cf., along the same line, Smith (1995: 33): "But when we force 'Socrates' into predicate position, what we have no longer seems to be predication, but instead a kind of identification: 'That man is Socrates' amounts to 'That man and Socrates are the same.'"

The crucial point here is that Łukasiewicz's whole reasoning seems to miss – fundamentally – the Aristotelian doctrine in question.

What Aristotle implies in the notion of accidental predication is the *ontological* thesis according to which an individual cannot be a predicate of another. It is not a question of terms or linguistic predicates: it is a question of real things and its actual predicates, in Aristotle's primary ontological sense.

Now, thus understood, the doctrine is clear as to all the examples given: the individual Socrates is not a predicate of that white blotch that I see over there; rather, white is a predicate of the individual Socrates. And it is only by virtue of a linguistic accident that we can *incorrectly* express this truth, saying "that white thing is Socrates".

From a logical point of view, the ontological notion of accidental predication means, thus, the following: the "correct" subject of the sentence, that is, the term that refers to the subject of the attribution, shifts, by linguistic accident, into the predicate's slot. And this entails, in the terms above mentioned, a more fundamental idea: the *sentence* "that white thing is Socrates" expresses the *proposition* "Socrates is white". (Naturally, the same is valid in the sentence "that who approaches is Callias" and other similar sentences.)

In the remaining examples, which are not instances of accidental predication, the ontological thesis according to which no individual can be a predicate is also not undermined. In fact, all these (and the same would hold for the previous examples, which can be likewise interpreted) are cases of identity, not predication, and thus none exhibits individuals *qua* predicates.

Alternatively, one would have to admit that, in sentences like "Sophroniscus was Socrates' father", the predicate ("Socrates' father") is not a singular term, but, rather surprisingly, a general term (in which case the sentence should seemingly be read as "Sophroniscus was *a* Socrates' father") and therefore the Aristotelian thesis is, once again, not affected.

7. Final Discussion and Conclusions

The Aristotelian notion of accidental predication appeals, first of all, to a question of purely ontological character – one which is crucial to acknowledge as such, in order to avoid mistaking it with the related logical question.

The ontological issue is thus: there are certain entities that, due to their very nature, cannot be predicates of anything.

Łukasiewicz saw fit to correct Aristotle, recalling that only terms – not entities – can be predicates. But this only manifests the confusion as to the two levels. In Aristotle's thought, a predicate is one thing and that which is predicated (viz., in

the predicative sentence) is a whole other thing. *Predicate* is an ontological notion, and it has to do with that which belongs to a given thing (thus called, in equally ontological manner, its subject). *That which is predicated* is a logical notion, strictly dependent from the ontological notion, and it has to do with what can *be said* of the subject (in a predicative sentence). In a predicative sentence, that which is predicated is, of course, a term. But this term can only be predicated of another because what it designates *is a predicate* of that which is designated by the other.

Now, there are things that cannot be (ontological) predicates of anything – such is the case of individuals. Accordingly, if the name of one of those things (i.e., a singular term) comes to be a part of a predicative sentence, filling the predicate's slot, there we have, literally, *an accident*.

But do such cases really exist? Surely not in Aristotle's examples ("The musician is white", "that white thing is a log"): in his examples, what fills the predicate's slot is never a singular term.

However, for the sake of the argument, one could re-read the examples in Łukasiewicz's vein ("this white object is Socrates", "that who approaches is Callias"), where what fills the predicate's slot is, surely enough, a singular term.

Before this situation, we are forced to reiterate: only accidentally can a name (a singular term) appear as a predicate in a predicative sentence, since the individual to which that name corresponds *is not the actual predicate* of the thing referred to by the term appearing as subject in the sentence, as it is patently shown in Aristotle's examples – and in Łukasiewicz's, for that matter – and well explainable in light of the Aristotelian doctrine.

Now, that accident by which the name of something that cannot be a (ontological) predicate appears as (logical) predicate is, quite clearly, an accident of linguistic nature.

This is what Aristotle is saying when he states that the sentence "this white thing is a log" is an inversion of the true predication "the log is white". And this is also the notion present in the neoplatonic distinction between "natural" and "counternatural" predication.

It is in this case, and in this case only, that the second level – the logical plan – intervenes. One could argue that, from a logical standpoint, the distinction between natural and counternatural predication (an ontological distinction) is meaningless and, thus, that it is meaningless to say that the "real" subject of the proposition expressed by the sentence "this white thing is a log" is that which is represented, in the sentence, by the predicate. From a strictly logical point of view, "log" is said of "this white thing" and is, therefore, the sentence's predicate. As to those ontological claims according to which, in the order of reality, it is white

which is the predicate of log, and not the other way around, logic may very well respect them, but it is under no obligation to take them into consideration.

However, if this were the case, in order to accommodate *in extremis* Aristotle's thesis, it would be necessary to concede that, although the objects it designates could never be (ontological) predicates, singular terms themselves could, indeed, be (logical) predicates.

As it happens, this is not so.

First of all, an Aristotelian could always argue that logic does not deal with sentences; it deals with propositions, where a singular term is *never* a predicate (except, of course, in identity formulae). Proposition, the last stronghold of essentialism, is also the last stronghold of metaphysics; and in the intensional dwelling of propositions, the metaphysical order of reality can always be preserved.

Secondly, Aristotle would still have good reasons to maintain that, even from a logical standpoint, singular terms *cannot* be predicates. Why? Because, in every situation where accidental predication occurs, either the predicate is not an actual singular term, or *the case is not even one of predication*.

In "this white thing is a log" (a typical example in Aristotle), "a log" most certainly is not a singular term – it is a general one. What the sentence means to express is that it happens to this white thing (singular) to belong to the class (universal) of logs. (To be perfectly fair to Aristotle, one should have put it vice-versa, but, for our purposes, the warning will suffice.)

No doubt this sentence, and every sentence equivalent to it, can always be read placing a singular term in the predicate's position. In such case, it would read something like "this white thing is this log" – graceless equivalent of "this white thing is Socrates" or "that there is Callias". But then, "this log", or "Socrates", or "Callias", is not attributed to "this white thing" as predicate, rather as another name for "this white thing", in which case the sentence is not asserting predication, but indeed identity, between the two terms.

In this case, Aristotle's accidental predication would be assimilated into the second class of Łukasiewicz's examples. In other words, Aristotle's accidental predication would be systematically reinterpreted as an ill-formed (or "accidental") identity formula.

It is, to be sure, a somewhat far-fetched hypothesis.

Yet, it holds a certain appeal, for it would allow us to reunite anew the two fringes, "lower" and "upper", of Aristotle's predication.

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